



10122 Buena Vista Drive
Conifer, Colorado 80433
720-244-6535

info@UniteSurvivors.org
www.UniteSurvivors.org

December 7, 2018

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Docket 18-336

Implementation of the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018

Dear Commissioners:

I am the President of a nonprofit representing people with lived experience with suicide — suicide loss survivors, attempt survivors, their care-givers and allies. We support the designation of a 3-digit access code for a Behavioral Health and Suicide Crisis Lifeline.

In this letter, we write to strenuously object to any suggestion that the 211 Information and Referral services should be designated to serve as a 3-digit access line for mental health crisis services. This would water down the effectiveness of crisis services significantly.

Using 211Info as a portal for crisis intervention would:

- Create unnecessary impediment to reaching crisis services – frustrating the express intent of Congress to ease access crisis services
- Delay crisis intervention by adding an extra step in the process of reaching trained call counselors



- Expose people experiencing mental health crisis to call counselors who lack mental health training and accreditation essential to safely handling mental health crisis
- Further tax an already burdened information and referral system that already offers a smorgasbord of services ranging from referral to food aid to radon remediation.

Simply put, the suggestion of interposing 211 as a barrier to reaching mental health crisis intervention services makes no sense and has serious adverse clinical implications by making the process of reaching crisis support more cumbersome than it already is.

Mental health and suicide crisis intervention is NOT their mission and they are NOT qualified to provide this form of life saving care. We need to streamline the process of getting people to crisis care, not add another layer to the process.

I urge you to designate a 3-digit code as a Behavioral Health and Suicide Crisis Lifeline. The time is now to embrace mental and emotional wellness as a national priority – and to deliver 3-digit access to crisis intervention services.

Three-digit access will:

- Deliver timely and effective crisis intervention services to millions of Americans
- Make it easier to connect people in need with help
- Meet the dramatically growing need for crisis intervention
- Help eliminate the stigma of mental health by normalizing help seeking for mental illness with the same priority we deliver for services like fire and rescue, social service referral, and telecommunication referral for people with hearing disabilities



Accordingly, we urge you to reject any notion that 211 should serve as portal for mental health and suicide crisis services, and we urge you instead to adopt a new, dedicated 3-digit access to a Behavioral Health and Suicide Crisis Lifeline

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sally Spencer-Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sally" being more prominent.

Dr. Sally Spencer-Thomas
President
United Suicide Survivors International

